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C O N F I D E N T I A L STATE 119727

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, MILI, CU, XA, AO

SUBJECT: CUBAN MILITARY PRESENCE IN ANGOLA

REF: PARIS 14284

1. BEST INFORMATION AVAILABLE TO US GOVERNMENT IS THAT THERE ARE BETWEEN 12,000 AND 15,000 REGULAR CUBAN TROOPS IN ANGOLA. IN ADDITION THERE MAY BE SEVERAL THOUSAND MORE CUBANS -- CIVILIANS AND MILITARY DEPENDENTS THERE. TOTAL CUBAN TROOPS AND ADVISORS IN ALL OF AFRICA MIGHT BE AS MUCH AS 20,000.

2. OUR INFORMATION ALSO SUGGESTS THAT INTERNAL SITUATION IN ANGOLA WILL NOT PERMIT EARLY WITHDRAWAL OF CUBAN TROOPS WITHOUT RISKS OF HEIGHTENED FACTIONALISM WITHIN MPLA, BREAKDOWN OF PUBLIC ORDER, OR POSSIBLY EVEN RESUMPTION OF CIVIL WAR. IN SHORT, THE EXTRACTION OF THE CUBAN EXPEDITIONARY FORCE FROM ANGOLA MAY PROVE TO BE MORE DIFFICULT THAN GETTING IT THERE.

3. CUBA HAS AN OBVIOUS INTEREST IN ESTABLISHING A "SOCIALIST" SYSTEM IN ANGOLA, WHICH ARGUES FOR KEEPING TROOPS THERE UNTIL THIS IS CONSOLIDATED. LIKEWISE, IT WILL HAVE A GROWING PROBLEM IN EXPLAINING THE NEED FOR

CUBAN TROOPS IN ANGOLA 2 1/2 MONTHS AFTER THE LAST SOUTH AFRICAN FORCES WERE WITHDRAWN FROM THE SOUTHERN PERIMETER OF ANGOLA, AND WHY FOREIGN TROOPS ARE NECESSARY TO ESTABLISH A "SOCIALIST" SYSTEM.

4. IT WOULD BE WORTHWHILE IF ADDRESSEE POSTS WHICH HAVE A DIPLOMATIC OR CONSULAR PRESENCE IN ANGOLA COULD ATTEMPT TO CONFIRM THE INFORMATION, REPORTEDLY SUPPLIED BY RAUL CASTRO, THAT CUBA HAS 20,000 TROOPS IN ANGOLA AND
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IF IN FACT IT STARTS REPATRIATING THEM AT THE RATE OF 250 PER WEEK. THIS WOULD STILL LEAVE 7,000 TROOPS IN ANGOLA ONE YEAR LATER, OR HALF OF WHAT WE BELIEVE THEY NOW HAVE THERE.

5. WE NOTE MPLA HAS BEEN DRAGGING ITS FEET IN ALLOWING WESTERN AND OTHER NON-COMMUNIST GOVERNMENTS WHICH HAVE RECOGNIZED THE REGIME TO ESTABLISH A PHYSICAL PRESENCE

THERE. THIS FACT IN ITSELF RAISES QUESTIONS ABOUT THE
FUTURE CUBAN ROLE IN ANGOLA.

6. CUBAN GOVERNMENT UNTIL NOW HAS CONCEALED THE EXTENT
OF ITS INVOLVEMENT IN ANGOLA FROM ITS OWN PEOPLE AND
HAS MINIMIZED ITS CASUALTIES.

7. DEPARTMENT VIEWS THE RAUL CASTRO STATEMENT ABOUT
20,000 TROOPS IN ANGOLA AS A SELF-SERVING FLOAT. IT
APPEARS DESIGNED TO JUSTIFY PROLONGED PRESENCE IN ANGOLA
OF CUBAN COMBAT FORCES FOR PURPOSES HAVING NOTHING TO
DO WITH THE CUBAN PUBLIC JUSTIFICATION FOR SENDING AN
EXPEDITIONARY FORCE TO ANGOLA. THIS JUSTIFICATION WAS
TO COUNTERACT THE PRESENCE IN ANGOLA OF SOUTH AFRICAN
STRIKE FORCE AT END OF 1975, WHICH AT NO TIME EXCEEDED
2,000 MEN.

8. ADDRESSEES MAY DRAW ON ABOVE AS APPROPRIATE IN
DISCUSSIONS WITH HOST GOVERNMENTS. KISSINGER

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